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Visits can resume at Ontario long-term care and retirement homes with strict conditions

**Chris Fox**

Web Content Writer, CP24

[Contact](#)

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TORONTO -- Ontarians will be allowed to visit their loved ones at long-term care homes, retirement homes and group homes as of Thursday but with strict conditions.

Visits were suspended at most homes back in March but last week Premier Doug Ford announced a "cautious restart" of visits at facilities that are not currently experiencing an outbreak.

There have been 335 outbreaks at Ontario's 626 long-term care homes but only 72 of them are still considered active.

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The number of active outbreaks at retirement homes, meanwhile, is down to 23. At one point here were 151 outbreaks.

"I know how hard this was on families. Trust me, I know," Ford said last week. "I know the tremendous toll this has taken on people not being able to see your loved ones and for many families not being able to be by the side of their loved ones in their final or most difficult moments is heartbreaking."

As of Thursday, residents at long-term care homes will be allowed one outdoor visit per week with a single visitor.

Visitors, however, will have to test negative for COVID-19 within the two weeks leading up to the visit and pass a symptom check upon arrival at the facility.

They will also be required to wear a face covering at all times.

At retirement homes, the rules are little less strict.

Both outdoor and indoor visits will be permitted, including ones in resident suites. The maximum number of visitors will be left to the discretion of individuals homes.

Since the start of the pandemic, there have been 1,636 resident deaths due to COVID-19 at Ontario long-term care homes.

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